

ATO to harness benefits of integrated information

The Australian Taxation Office is reinventing itself to be a contemporary service organisation with 'clients at the centre of everything'.

Jodie Thomas, Executive Director, ATO Corporate, said implementing streamlined, modern governance processes was part of that journey and technology was critical to moving from being 'clunky' and 'process rich' to contemporary and agile.

Ms Thomas is overseeing implementation of software system Protecht.ERM and brims with enthusiasm for the changes it is heralding at ATO.

She told *Comcover Connect* she sees greater opportunities for process automation that extend beyond the initial goal of improved governance and risk management.

'Our goal is to be more modern, holistic and transparent and to move up the value chain by focusing more on the value-add and less on routine activities that can be automated,' she said.

Before Protecht.ERM, governance and risk information was stored in silos—sometimes paper-based, sometimes in databases or Microsoft SharePoint. The goal was for information to be centralised and easily accessible.

ATO conducted extensive market research, talking to product vendors, other government entities and large corporations to gather information. A common factor among the most efficient organisations was their use of information and governance software systems.

Since making the decision to engage Protecht last July, ATO now has the first four business processes—financial assurance, internal compliance, quality, and risk management—in final testing or going live.

Ms Thomas said implementation was iterative with more business processes planned.

While ATO had modernised policies and processes over the past two years, 'even the best processes are still disconnected if they're on paper or in silos'. Technology was enabling ATO to be more effective, Ms Thomas said. Her aim was to see every paper-based governance function brought into a one-stop shop, she told *Comcover Connect*.

The core driver for implementing Protecht.ERM was achieving 'a lighter touch' while maintaining key controls; improving governance; and providing better support for senior management.

'You can't underestimate the value-add of having information in one spot—it allows for a more informed discussion on risk, compliance and governance generally,' Ms Thomas said.

One streamlined function has seen ATO cut 80 per cent of a previously predominantly manual workload. ATO's list of whole-of-government requirements currently contains 564 line items and must be continuously updated. Previously information was garnered from a share drive, paper documents and contact with central agencies. It is now locked into Protecht.ERM with variance lists quickly and easily accessible.

Automation was making ATO 'challenge how we do things'. 'You have to communicate a function to build it electronically,' she said.

Protecht.ERM offers real-time reporting and customised dashboards. Ms Thomas says the system is easily revised if a configured module is not achieving its goal.

Ms Thomas has a few suggestions for Fund Members contemplating installing governance, compliance and risk management software:

- Overestimate the amount of communication and support needed during the roll out. Provide proper change management and support across the agency for all end users.
- Don't skimp on system testing. Over-budget the time needed and use the broadest range of people to test, from power users to those who are reticent with IT.
- Have a productive partnership with the software provider, those who own the processes, and the end users. Invest time to get the tripartite relationship right.

And Ms Thomas's final word of advice is 'use the integrated information you can now access—don't just look at it'. ●

Reducing red tape

Implementing efficient risk information management systems can reduce red tape.

The results from Comcover's 2015 risk management benchmarking programme reported 63 per cent of Fund Members still used Microsoft Excel to capture, monitor and report risk information.

Efficient management of risk data and information via software system Protecht.ERM enables Fund Members to focus more time and resources on decision making because routine work involved in managing risk, regulatory compliance, and detailed stakeholder incident and event reporting is automated and streamlined.

Managing risks is more than just collecting risk data. Protecht.ERM's risk analytics and reporting module is a key component of the system and can assist Fund Members to:

- Produce highly sophisticated tabular reports and graphical dashboards that can be tailored by users with no need to revert to specialist IT teams or Protecht, enabling Fund Members to be self-sufficient. Once trained, users can configure the software to precise agency-specific needs and protocols.
- Quickly and easily download reports and dashboards into PowerPoint, Excel or PDF formats at the push of a button.
- Email reports and dashboards at scheduled times or on demand.

Protecht.ERM has been IRAP assessed, and can store data to 'protected' security level.

Protecht CEO Alf Esteban said Comcover had demonstrated foresight in realising that, with the changed environment generated by the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act, Fund Members needed a software solution that could help them achieve their risk management objectives and be implemented quickly. ●